

RESIDENTS SAY WHEN THE HOSPITAL WAS BUILT, THEY THOUGHT IT WOULD BOOST THEIR BUSINESS

Kiruddu Hospital sewage forms 'river'

By Gerald Tenywa, Juliet Walswa and Violet Nabatenzi

A stench cuts through the air and passersby hold their noses. Big flies take off and land in a manner similar to their aerial cousins – the helicopters. This is at the entrance of Kiruddu hospital in Makindye division, Kampala.

Near the hospital's gate is a fountain formed as sewage squeezes through small holes in the foundation of the wall fence. It flows fast and plunges into an open drainage channel that flows along Salaama Road. It later crosses the road and a small dam before the 'river' flows into a swamp connecting Buziga valley to Lake Victoria.

"The hospital has brought a very big toilet in our midst," said Vasta Kyalimpa who lives in the neighbourhood of Kiruddu hospital.

"When the hospital was being built, we were happy because we thought it was bringing development – more customers to buy our products but it has turned into a nuisance," Kyalimpa adds.

Kalanzi Sindi who lives about 100 metres away from the hospital says the smell is unbearable and their situation has not changed, despite persistent complaints. "What have you come to do? Stop this sewage? I do not think you will manage to help us," he said.

"We have complained and nothing has changed. Even the MP, Allan Ssewanyana, intervened when we demonstrated and he was arrested by the Police and they threw him on their pick-up," he said.

A stone's throw away, Murongori Bwambale wondered how a hospital which is supposed to improve health has endangered the



Chickens feeding on sewage in front of Kiruddu Hospital in Kampala yesterday. Photo by Badru Katumba

"When the hospital was being built, we were happy because we thought it was bringing development, but it has turned into a nuisance," Kyalimpa, a resident

very health of the community.

Mable Mugisha said the building housing the hospital is a symbol of the better times that they expect from Government, but it is also a source of the river of sewage.

"How can Government build

a hospital without taking care of the waste water?" she asked.

Mariam Musisi, who operates an eatery by the roadside at Kiruddu, believes that the stench destroys the ambience and the mood of potential customers. "I no

longer get as many customers as I used to," she complained.

Edward Kambugu, the LC1 chairperson for Salaama-Buziga, said they have been suffering ever since Kiruddu was opened two years ago. He also said they do not know who should clear the mess at Kiruddu.

"When we contact Kiruddu-Mulago, they refer us to KCCA and then KCCA sends us back to Kiruddu-Mulago. We are confused and we do not know what to do," he said.

Kiruddu is one of the new hospitals in the city and has been upgraded to a referral hospital. It was upgraded from health center IV when it was completed in December 2015.

But construction of a sewage plant was deferred.

A similar hospital at Kawempe was constructed and opened without a sewage treatment plant.

However, the stench at Kawempe is not as bad as that at Kiruddu.

"We operate business here, but the stench occurs when it rains and the sewage from the hospital contributes to floods," said Musa Gulumya, a boda-boda rider at Kawempe Hospital.

Noose tightens on Kiruddu

The Kampala Capital City Authority has issued a notice to close Kiruddu Hospital because it has become a public

nuisance.

The director of health and environment under KCCA, Daniel Oculi, explained that before the notice to Kiruddu, Mulago management had several engagements with them (Mulago) assured that the problem would be rectified.

"KCCA's interest is to have this nuisance rectified immediately. We gave Kiruddu management 28 days to rectify the mess, and we want it done immediately," Okello said.

Besides Kiruddu, KCCA also planning to clamp down on Kawempe. "Kawempe will be next if they do not improve on their sewage disposal," said the KCCA director of planning and corporate affairs, Paul Kaujiu, said.

Mulago reacts

The Mulago Hospital spokesperson, Enock Kusanja, confirmed that they received KCCA's notice and that they were engaging the authority to rescind the decision.

Kusanja said the Ministry of Health had already earmarked funds for connecting the hospital to a sewer line, about to begin. He said they were working hard to have the problem solved.

Kiruddu Hospital cost

The hospital was constructed at a cost of \$10.3m (about sh26b) loan from the African Development Bank. Completed in December 2015, and upgraded from a health centre IV to a hospital status, Kiruddu has capacity for 170 in-patients.

According to the environmental and social management plan summary report on the Kiruddu and Kawempe project seen by *New Vision*, it was pointed out that "the most serious environmental impacts that could potentially occur during the operation phase relate to sanitation, disposal of solid waste and air emissions."

"While Mulago is connected to the National Water and Sewerage Corporation sewage system, neither Kiruddu nor Kawempe is."

Moreover, in addition to human waste, water from all the three facilities contain blood, body fluids, and chemicals, and will, therefore, need pre-treatment before being discharged into the sewer or into septic tanks."

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